

# Riddings Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112496
<b>Local Authority</b>	DERBYSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310901
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Brennan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs K Whitehead
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs A Politowski
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	West Street Riddings Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 4EW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01773 602767
<b>Fax number</b>	01773 609901

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the pupils' achievements. In addition, evidence was gathered from classroom observations and school documentation to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and leadership and management. A particular focus was given to how teaching and learning, and the curriculum promote pupils' writing and how well the school devises and uses action plans to guide its work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

Pupils attend this average sized school from the Riddings area of Alfreton. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or other disabilities is also broadly average. Children start the nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typically found for their age, especially in aspects of their literacy. The school has been awarded the Basics Skills Quality Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Riddings is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. As one parent put it, 'a lovely school all in all,' a sentiment shared by many other parents. Pupils here do well, both academically and personally, and are well prepared for their future education. From their relatively low starting points, pupils achieve well to attain the challenging targets the school sets for them and to reach standards that are typically average by the time they leave the school. Vulnerable pupils are given good support and achieve well. Support staff are skilled and play a full part in pupils' learning. In mathematics and, more latterly in reading, an increasing number of pupils go beyond expected standards. However, in contrast, fewer pupils reach the higher levels in writing, because more could be done to foster imaginative writing, particularly through the wider curriculum.

It is not by chance that pupils do well. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has done a first-rate job in building upon existing strengths and bringing a fresh vision, energy and ambition to the school. She is careful to consult with parents, staff, pupils and governors. As a result, a sense of common purpose and team spirit has emerged. The roles and responsibilities of other leaders have been clarified and much has been done to develop their leadership. Governors do a good job in both supporting the school and holding it to account. Other leaders, many of whom are new to post, have made a good start in taking on their responsibilities.

Change has been pursued with vigour and decisions taken based on a deep understanding of the context the school operates in and of pupils' experiences. This has helped tailor approaches to teaching and learning and, to some extent, the curriculum, to meet pupils' needs. The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are good. However, some of the school's approaches and changes are working better than others. This is because action plans for taking priorities forward are of variable quality. In particular, plans for literacy and the curriculum as a whole do not spell out precisely what the school hopes to achieve. As a result, monitoring exercises to check that actions have worked, although commonplace, are not always directed with enough precision. Much has been done to check how well the fostering of independence, reading and speaking and listening are working. Less has been done to check success in writing and of recent changes to the curriculum.

In a response to pupils' limited language skills on entry, the school has put speaking and listening at the heart of learning and has done this well. From being rather reticent and 'quiet' workers when they start school, pupils leave willing and able to express their views sensibly and to listen to the views of others. This is because the adults' gently encouraging manner helps pupils give their best and feel comfortable in talking about learning. Targeted training has been successful in helping staff to use a range of methods to get pupils to do this. This approach works well when, in mathematics for example, pupils have to explain their solutions to problems to their peers. Such purposeful talk leads thinking forward and prepares pupils well for solving their own problems. On occasion however, talk can be an end in its own right, rather than a tool to support learning. Nevertheless, lessons typically have clarity of purpose and give good scope for pupils to make decisions and to take responsibility for their learning, a key weakness noted in the last inspection.

As the school readily acknowledges, changes to the curriculum are 'work in progress.' Much has been done to improve accommodation. It has gone from being 'shabby' at the time of the

last inspection to being bright, cheery and one, which in the main serves learning well. The school has done much to enrich the curriculum. French has been added and a good range of trips, visitors to school and clubs add extra interest and broaden pupils' experiences. Much has also been done to strengthen the curriculum for pupils' personal and social development and in recent times, their reading skills. Attempts to help pupils learn and apply key skills by making thoughtful use of them in the wider curriculum are meeting with mixed success. On occasion, this approach works well. For example, pupils honed their speaking and listening skills through acting out their own spoken plays using puppets made in design and technology. However, this approach is yet to fully serve writing. At present, much of what pupils write when working in other subjects is of a factual nature, with fewer opportunities evident for them to write in an imaginative and lively manner.

The valuing of pupils' thoughts and a willingness to involve them as partners in learning has a positive impact on their personal development, which is good overall. As well as making decisions about learning, pupils take responsibility for their own improvement and regularly assess their work against known targets. Their responsibilities extend beyond the classroom through mechanisms, such as the influential School Council, which help give pupils a prominent voice in the school. Pupils develop well as citizens, reflecting their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school operates as a harmonious community, with pupils getting on very well with each other. Pupils clearly enjoy school, although attendance rates remain below average, despite the best efforts of the school. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being in school comply with the latest government guidelines, reflecting the good quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and has improved well of late, especially in the Nursery. As a consequence of good teaching and learning and of the good range of experiences on offer, children achieve well. They make good progress towards the expected goals and begin to catch up from their often low starting points. Standards at the end of the Reception year are close to those typically found in their personal and mathematical development, but are still below expected levels overall because aspects of literacy lag behind other areas. Talk is used well as a tool for learning and to help children interact with each other. Staff are skilled at joining in with learning and in asking questions which get children thinking and talking. A good balance is struck between child-led and adult-led learning, and in the Nursery in particular, between learning indoors and learning outdoors. Here, ready access to a well-equipped outdoor area allows children to work seamlessly in the fresh air and in the classroom. Although older children also work outdoors regularly, they do not have the same ease of access that younger children enjoy.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Give pupils more opportunities to write creatively, especially in the wider curriculum.
- Ensure that action plans have sufficient detail to enable their outcomes to be fully evaluated.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No



## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

29th April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ridding Nursery and Infant School, Alfreton, DE55 4EW

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school when I visited it recently. It felt like I was visiting one big happy family.

You go to a good school and one which is getting better still. You play your part well. You behave well and get on with each other. I was particularly impressed with how well you know your targets and with how hard you try in lessons. I very much liked the way that you are able to talk about what you are doing and how you helped each other to learn. I also saw how sensibly you got equipment out, put it away and the decisions you made about what you were doing. You clearly enjoy school and some of you told me that this was because the work was just 'hard enough.' I could see that a lot of the work you are doing was not only making you think hard but was also fun. I have asked the school to find ways to make you think and have fun when writing by getting you to do imaginative writing. You can help by continuing to try hard and to talk with your friends and your teachers about your ideas.

The headteacher, staff and governors work hard everyday to make your school better. They have made some impressive improvements to the building for example, and have some good ideas about making the school better still. I have asked them to make sure that their plans for doing this are clearly written down so that adults can check in the future how well the plans work out. You can do your bit by continuing to tell the school what you think about how well it works in the grown-up way that you told me.

Thank you once again and good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Brennan

Lead inspector